



Getting Ready for Kindergarten: How Parents & Providers Can Support Children

What does school readiness mean?

The goal of school readiness efforts is to support ALL children entering kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, health and attitude they need to be successful in school and in life.

Nebraska's *ready children* are supported by *ready families* who are supported by *ready communities* with *ready schools* which are prepared to meet the individual needs of all children the year they are age-eligible to attend kindergarten. High quality early care and education programs provide opportunities to *get ready*.

How can I help children be ready?

Children come into kindergarten with a wide variety of skills and knowledge. Children who are curious and enthusiastic about learning new things, and have self-control and attention skills will gain any skills they are lacking throughout the year. There is not one thing, nor a list of skills that makes a child ready for school. However, through every day routines and fun activities, parents and providers can:

Promote Good Health and Physical Well-Being by ensuring children...

- ✓ eat a balanced diet, get plenty of rest & see adults model good healthy practices
- ✓ receive regular dental & medical care, including immunizations
- ✓ play outdoors and do other activities that develop large muscles and coordination like dancing and building with large blocks
- ✓ work on puzzles, scribble, color, paint, draw, cut, and other activities that develop small muscles coordination

Encourage Social and Emotional Preparation by allowing children to...

- ✓ learn confidence by exploring & trying new things
- ✓ hear praise for their efforts more than the end results: "you worked hard on drawing that tree" rather than, "that's a pretty picture"
- ✓ work alone & finish tasks, including putting away supplies independently
- ✓ take care of own things & needs such as using toilet, washing hands & dressing
- ✓ play with other children and learn to share & cooperate
- ✓ follow simple 2 or 3 step directions
- ✓ follow rules & understand the "why" behind the rules
- ✓ see self-control & problem solving skills modeled by adults
- ✓ communicate needs, wants, thoughts, and feelings while being sensitive to others

Support Language and General Knowledge by providing opportunities to...

- ✓ be read to every day; listen to a story in a group without disrupting others
- ✓ ask & answer questions which both adult & child can explore the answer to together
- ✓ count, sort & classify things, noticing similarities and differences
- ✓ practice writing and recognizing letters, name, numbers, shapes and colors
- ✓ get firsthand experiences to do things in the world- to see and touch objects, hear new sounds, smell & taste foods, and watch things move
- ✓ learn through play: children learn best when they're having fun, so use games, toys natural events & routines to teach, rather than flashcards and worksheets

How can I help the transition to kindergarten?

Having a successful entry into kindergarten will help children have a positive attitude about school and learning. When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children do better in school, stay in school longer, and enjoy school more. Providers and parents can work together with the schools to:

- make doctors appointments & practice new school-day routines well in advance
- talk enthusiastically with children, and read books about starting kindergarten
- ask the kindergarten teacher about their expectations, routines and rules
- incorporate those kindergarten routines and rules into children's daily lives
- participate in school open houses, informational meetings, etc.
- visit the new classroom, locate bathrooms cafeteria, and cubbies/lockers
- meet with the kindergarten teacher to discuss any special needs/concerns

What resources are available to help me?

Answers to frequently asked questions and concerns of parents of about-to-be kindergartners can be found in *Come As You Are: Kindergarten for Nebraska's Children*, available from the Nebraska Department of Education at <http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/pubs/CAYA2012.pdf>.

The *Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines* are a great tool to learn how any adult working with any child, in any environment, can support children in all areas of development. These can be found at <http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/elg.html>.

Additional ideas on how adults can help support children on their path to school success are in *Getting School Ready*, available at <http://earlylearning.org/resources/publications/getting-school-ready> and *School Readiness- Preparing Children for Kindergarten and Beyond* available at <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/schoolreadiness.pdf>.

The National Education Association offers suggestions to help prepare children for school in the areas of academics, social skills, independence skills and communication skills available at http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/44013_NEA_W_L8.pdf.

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning has information on how to support self-regulation and other social skills available at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>.

UNL Extension offers suggestions on how to avoid some common anxiety and fears in their *Just In Time* newsletter at <http://www.extension.org/sites/default/files/w/3/3f/JITP59-60mo.pdf>.

United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County offers a free downloadable Countdown to Kindergarten calendar at <http://www.unitedwaylincoln.org/images/pdf/events/KindergartenCalendar.pdf>.

Play in the Early Years: Key to School Success offers insight into what children learn through play at http://www.4children.org/images/pdf/Play_pamphlet_eng.pdf.



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